

LIFE-SAVING STATION AT OR NEAR WATSONS PIER,  
SOUTH KINGSTON, R. I.

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MARCH 27, 1896.—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

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MR. WANGER, from the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, submitted the following

ADVERSE REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. No. 235.]

The Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 235) to provide a life-saving station at or near Watsons Pier, on the coast of South Kingston, in the State of Rhode Island, having had the same under consideration, and not being satisfied of the immediate necessity for the establishment of a life-saving station at the place named, respectfully report the bill back with the accompanying papers, and recommend that it lie upon the table.

The report of the General Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service (concurred in by the Secretary of the Treasury) is appended hereto. It furnishes the facts respecting the matter.

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT LIFE-SAVING SERVICE,  
*Washington, D. C., January 17, 1896.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your reference, for report, of the letter of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives, dated January 4, 1896, transmitting bill (H. R. 235) to provide a life-saving station at or near Watsons Pier, on the coast of South Kingston, in the State of Rhode Island, for suggestions touching the merits of the bill and the propriety of its passage.

A bill of the same import was introduced in the House of Representatives during the Fifty-third Congress, and in response to a similar request from the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, I, under date of February 5, 1894, reported to the Secretary of the Treasury my views thereon, concurring in those expressed by certain officers of the Life-Saving Service, that there was no urgent need for the establishment of a station at the point named.

I presume this report is now in the files of the committee, but I inclose a copy of it, and have to say that no facts have since come to my knowledge tending to change the views I therein expressed.

Respectfully, yours,

S. I. KIMBALL,  
*General Superintendent.*

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT LIFE-SAVING SERVICE,  
*Washington, D. C., February 5, 1894.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your reference, for report, of the letter of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives, dated September 13, 1893, transmitting bill H. R. 215, entitled a bill "to provide a

life-saving station at or near Watsons Pier, on the coast of South Kingston, in the State of Rhode Island," for suggestions touching the merits of the bill and the propriety of its passage.

Desiring the views of the officers of the district which embraces the point referred to, I addressed letters to them asking for the same. The inspecting officer replies as follows:

"In regard to the erection of a station at Watsons Pier, I respectfully state that this point is about 1 mile north of Whale River light-house, and about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles WNW. of Beaver Tail light-house, situated on the south end of Conanicut Island. These two light stations are guides to vessels bound to Providence through what is known as the Western Passage of Narragansett Bay. Each is provided with a signal to warn the mariner in thick or foggy weather. The former has a bell struck by machinery every twenty seconds, and the latter has a 10-inch steam whistle giving blasts at frequent intervals.

"With these aids it would warrant the belief that a careful navigator could enter the Western Passage in most any kind of weather, and once inside and once to the north of inside of Beaver Tail a fairly good harbor is found. In fact a safe harbor in winds from the west around by north to east, as may be seen by consulting coast chart No. 113. This Western Passage is a frequented anchorage for vessels of all sizes, extending from Watsons Pier to the mouth of the Providence River. This I know to be the case from personal knowledge, having served as first lieutenant of the revenue-cutter *Dexter* three years on the Newport station, cruising in these waters during this period. It may be urged that the loss of the steamer *Rhode Island* would warrant the establishment of a station at Watsons Pier, but I was informed by the late Capt. Jesse Mott, who commanded the *Rhode Island* when she went on the rocks near this place, or what is known as Bonnet Point, that when he saw the break in the rocks the morning she struck, had he not stopped his vessel but hove the wheel hard a port he would have undoubtedly gone clear; hence it would appear that the steamer was lost by an error of judgment, for she had passed and repassed the same place time and again under the same conditions.

"Watsons Pier is but  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles to the northward and eastward of the station at Narragansett Pier, and were a station established at this point it would be placing it too close, in my judgment, to the pier station, and farther up the bay. In view of the facts, as stated, it does not appear to me as though the establishment and maintaining of a station at Watsons Pier, near which vessels can find a comparatively safe harbor, is warranted. I am of the opinion that there are other places in the Third Life-Saving district where a station could be erected to much greater advantage, and which would justify the outlay."

The district superintendent reports:

"The station at Watsons Pier I do not approve of, as the most part of that coast can be seen from the Narragansett Pier station, and as soon as a vessel passes Whale Rock she is in comparatively smooth water and a short distance from Dutch Island Harbor."

The assistant district superintendent says:

"A life-saving station in the vicinity of Watsons Pier would not only protect the Narragansett shore from Bonnet Point to the mouth of the Narrow River (which can not be seen from the limits of the patrol from the Narragansett Pier station), which is a very dangerous one, with steep ragged rocks and sunken reefs, but would also bring within view the west shore of Conanicut Island from Dutch Island Harbor to Beaver Tail light-house. Vessels stranding on this shore break up very quickly, and assistance, to be of avail, must be rendered soon after the vessels strike. In the year 1880, the steamer *Rhode Island*, of the Stonington Line, with several hundred passengers, stranded on Bonnet Point near Watsons Pier and a terrible loss of life was averted by the sea being comparatively smooth, the vessel breaking up soon after the last person was landed."

I concur with the two first-named officers in the view that there is no urgent need for the establishment of a station at Watsons Pier.

Respectfully, yours,

S. I. KIMBALL,  
General Superintendent.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.